



Newsletter

News and Views from Campaign for State Education – South East London

Welcome to the 3rd edition of CASE – South East London. If you would like to share news or subscribe (unsubscribe) to the Newsletter, please e-mail: CASE-SEL@outlook.com. Information will be published anonymously, unless you give permission for your name to be used. For information about CASE and the author, please see the last page.

News from Parliament

New Appointments (and what Justine Greening should focus on)

The new Prime Minister, Theresa May, sacked Nicky Morgan MP as Secretary of State for Education, and appointed Justine Greening as new Secretary of State for Education. Unfortunately, Nick Gibb MP is still Minister for Schools.

Amanda Spielman was Nicky Morgan MP's preferred candidate for Head of Ofsted when Sir Michael Wilshaw retires at the end of the year. Despite opposition to the appointment by the Education Select Committee, Justine Greening has confirmed the appointment.

Angela Rayner becomes the third MP to hold the post of Shadow Secretary of State for Education after Lucy Powell and Pat Glass both resigned. Ms Rayner was elected MP for Ashton-under-Lyne in 2015.

Justine Greening has delayed the [Fairer Funding](#) proposal to 2018/19 to allow more consultation. On the calls from many Conservative MPs to allow more Grammar Schools to be built, Justine Greening said she is open to having the discussion. Let's hope that instead of creating more selective schools, Justine Greening will focus on fixing what is broken in education, taking note of the mounting evidence:

- The [Public Accounts Committee](#) published a report in June calling for an urgent review of teacher training in England, concluding the Government fails to understand the difficulties many schools face in recruiting teachers.
- The [Education Policy Institute](#) think tank has produced a league table of academy trusts and councils in England. David Laws, former schools minister and the institute's chairman, said successive governments had been "in denial" about failing academies. The findings show that academy trusts are among the most and least successful at improving pupil performance, at both primary and secondary level. Mr Laws says that it shows it would have been "rash and dangerous" to press ahead with forcing all schools to become academies, as it would have meant that some high-achieving local authorities could have been put into lower-achieving academy trusts.
- The [Sutton Trust](#) education charity has also published a report warning that too many academy trusts are not providing a good enough education for disadvantaged pupils. It says that one in five academy chains is "performing substantially below the national average for attainment and improvement" for children from poorer families.

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Educational Excellence Everywhere & Education for All

There is **cross party opposition** to forced academisation and to government plans to remove parents from the education landscape by the proposal to change the legal requirement for governing bodies to have minimum 2 parent governors i.e. to have no parent governors. If the government pursues its plans to force LA maintained schools to convert into

academies in local authorities considered to be “underperforming” or “unviable”, this potentially impacts more than 50 local authorities, including Conservative local authorities, Bexley, Bromley, Kent, Medway, Windsor & Maidenhead, South Gloucestershire, Reading, (to name a few) who could fall into one or other category.

Reminder: This is what the Conservative 2015 Manifesto said: “We will continue to allow all good schools to expand, whether they are maintained schools, academies, free schools or grammar schools.” The Government is acting beyond its mandate in forcing good schools to convert into an academy with its latest proposal.

The Regional School Commissioner

Regional School Commissioners (**RSC**) gained powers on 18th April to issue Academy Orders to local authority (**LA**) maintained schools, if the schools are inadequate or otherwise “Causing Concern” or, from Autumn, if a school falls into the “Coasting” definition. Note that the requirement to consult parents in relation to forced academisation was removed under the Education & Adoption Act 2016.

Lewisham and surrounding borough / regions fall under the South East South London RCS, headed by Dominic Herrington.

I emailed Dominic Herrington in April, and received no response. I also emailed him on 20th July, and have not yet received a response. His boss, Sir David Walker, said, when giving evidence to the Education Select Committee, that the RSC’s should reply to parent communications, and if they do not, parents could contact him. Watch this space!

Select Committee Inquiry into Multi Academy Trusts

The Education Select Committee is a parliamentary committee chaired by Neil Carmichael MP. The Select Committee launched an inquiry into Multi Academy Trusts (**MATs**) on 18th March.

Three parents from Lewisham have separately submitted written evidence, which have since been published. I wrote about my experience waiting for our local school to be converted into an academy, against

the wishes of so many. We are parents with no voice, and to date, ignored by our Regional School Commissioner.

You can view the written submission using this link.
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/education-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/multi-academy-trusts-15-16/>

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Inquiry into DfE Financial Mismanagement

The DfE used a statutory instrument to extend the statutory deadline for laying its financial accounts before Parliament to 29 April 2016 (from 31st January). Not only could the DfE not submit its financial accounts

on time, but Sir Amyas Morse, the National Audit Office's (NAO) Comptroller and Auditor General, issued an 'adverse opinion' on the DfE's group financial statements.

Neil Carmichael MP, Chair of the Education Committee was not impressed:

"Government departments have ten months to get their accounts in order and laid before Parliament for proper public scrutiny, and most manage with far less. Slipping out a statutory instrument to extend the deadline on the last possible day is further evidence of DfE's struggle to get its act together on financial matters.

The Committee agreed in December to invite the Permanent Secretary to explain the Department's plans for academy accounts. Today's events leave us with no alternative but to consider the wider question of financial management at the DfE."

The Committee has since agreed to delay the hearing to give the Permanent Secretary more time to prepare. This doesn't seem like the "technical" issue that Nicky Morgan MP described to the Committee. The long and

short of this seems to be that the DfE has no idea of the costs associated with creating, converting and running academy schools.

2016 SATs Results

The Department for Education has said that it will cap the number of schools that can be below the floor standard at one percentage point more than last year, when 5 per cent – 676 primary schools – did not reach the floor.

The Department for Education stressed that ministers had advised the regional schools commissioners and Ofsted to take the fact that it was the first year of a new assessment system into account when they are considering school performance.

Education secretary Nicky Morgan told a gathering of headteachers: "It is important that all involved see these results for what they are – a reflection of how well children this year have performed against a new curriculum. I believe this is a good start that vindicates our decision to raise standards and will help ensure those who need extra help get the support they need to lay the foundations for a bright future."

Local Education News

Lewisham Education Commission & Report

In December 2015, the Mayor of Lewisham approved the appointment of an Education Commission, headed by Christine Gilbert, to provide the council with views on how to improve the performance of its secondary schools.

The report was published in April and made public at the beginning of June. <http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/43917/04Lewisham%20Education%20Commission%20Report.pdf>

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A Note from Cllr Paul Maslin, Lewisham's Cabinet Member for Children & Young People (15 July 2016)

Back in April, Nicky Dixon was kind enough to allow me to use a letter I sent to her as a blog post entitled, 'School Academisation: A Lewisham Perspective'. This can still be viewed here:
<http://themaslinmemo.blogspot.co.uk/2016/04/school-academisation-lewisham.html>

Following the publication of the Lewisham Education Commission Report, there has been concern expressed about what it says about Academies, and Multi Academy Trusts, or MATs. Rather than try and rebut any view that I think people may have formed, I thought it might be useful if, as the Lead Member for Children & Young People, I laid out my understanding

of what the report says and what it means for us. Firstly, I see nothing in the report that recommends that the Council seeks the mass conversion of schools into academies of one sort or another, at the earliest possible opportunity. For ease of reference, here are the 3 recommendations from the report that relate to academies and MATs, so you can judge for yourself:

Establishing a new approach to school organisation (page 15 of the report)

- 1. School federations in Lewisham should be supported if their governors decide that they wish to convert to academy status, with these 'home-grown' MATs being seen as potential academy sponsors for schools experiencing difficulties and as promoters of free schools where these are required across the borough in the next few years.*
- 2. The local authority, headteachers and governors should work together to ensure that every school in Lewisham is part of a formal and effective school collaborative group – whether as part of a MAT or through developing and deepening the work of a local cluster, collaborative or federation.*
- 3. The development of MATs and local clusters of schools should be seen alongside and not as a substitute for – a borough-wide school-improvement partnership. The borough-wide partnership that we propose should be tasked with identifying those heads that have the potential and interest in moving into executive leadership and providing them with the development and support to take on this role as more schools move to working through federations, MATs or other school groups.*

In my view, the Commission Report doesn't endorse one form of school governance over another. It merely reports to the Mayor the thinking of some schools and suggests a response that is both pragmatic and potentially to our advantage. I say to our advantage because we are going to need new schools in the future and these will need to be free schools as only academies can apply to open free schools.

collaborative working between Lewisham's schools by setting up new bodies like the Partnership Steering Group and the Lewisham Secondary Challenge. The encouraging news is that Heads, both primary and secondary, are right behind the Report, support the recommendations and are committed to getting involved to make a success of the new organisations and to raise standards.

I don't think that the report represents any kind of 'hand break turn' change in policy. On the contrary, it builds on the work we have been doing over the last year or so as laid out in our School Improvement Plan. What I think is genuinely exciting about the report is the recommendations it makes to drive forward more

The government is committed to take the School Improvement function, and the funds to support it, away from Local Authorities. Nationally, we will have to transition to a school-led system of improvement. We will continue to work with schools as we make this change in Lewisham. The Education Commission

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Report provides a useful challenge and insight as we seek to develop our collaborative approach to

improving schools and the life chances of our children and young people.

Our Schools

Sedgehill School

Parents are still wondering what is going to happen to our school. It seems that a Sponsor cannot be found for Sedgehill owing to its budget deficit and PFI debt. The conversion to an academy has been deferred to 1st January 2017, resulting in the school leadership having to close the school early so that preparations could be undertaken for the next academic year. The uncertainty and agony continues.

A sponsor (if one is found) may wish to change the name of the school to reflect the MAT i.e. ARK Sedgehill School. It is important that parents are not forced to undertake an expensive re-fitting of school uniform, unless and until children have out-grown existing uniform. The DfE has published best practice guidance on school uniform for all schools which is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-uniform

Heidi Alexander MP Asks Questions

1. To ask the Secretary of State for Education, (a) on how many occasions and (b) in relation to which schools since 2010 an Academy Order has been rescinded due to the inability of the Regional Schools Commissioner to secure a sponsor.
2. To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average period of time was between an Academy Order being issued and a sponsor being named for schools in each year since 2010.
3. To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidelines her Department has issued on the time to be taken by a Regional Schools Commissioner to name a sponsor for a school that has been issued with an Academy Order.

Edward Timpson replied: *“Since the Education and Adoption Act came into force in April 2016, the Secretary of State has been under a duty to make an Academy Order in respect of any maintained school that has been judged by Ofsted to be inadequate. Regional Schools Commissioners, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, ensure that the maintained school becomes a sponsored academy as swiftly as possible, after considering the circumstances in the school, and then identifying the most suitable sponsor.*

No Academy Orders have been revoked to date. 143 Academy Orders have been made since the new duty came into force. It is too soon to give an annual average of how long it has taken to match a school to a sponsor under these new arrangements.”

Heidi will follow up in September to get obtain answers to the questions asked.

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Haberdasher Aske Fraud

Samuel Kayode, a former accountant employed by Haberdasher Aske, was found guilty of obtaining £150,000 by theft and £3.95 million by fraud. A nine-year jail sentence was handed down at Woolwich Crown Court in June.

Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under- Secretary of State for Education, said, on being asked a question on this

matter in the House of Lords, *“Academies and free schools face tighter financial scrutiny than local authority maintained schools. They must publish annual, independently-audited accounts, of which there is no equivalent requirement on maintained schools. We take swift action whenever we identify financial irregularities.”* Right.....

Lewisham Education Partnership Code

As the school landscape is set to change, with more academies and free schools, I think it is Imperative that an Education Partnership Code is written applying to all education stakeholders to set out at high level the interaction, ethics and values amongst and between all

education stakeholders to ensure all stakeholders are recognized and valued in the education chain. We value transparency and accountability and wish all of our schools to work together, regardless of structure, for the benefit of our children. A project for the Autumn.

Lewisham & Other Boroughs Schools Ofsted Inspections & Reports

| Month | School | LA | Previous Rating | New Rating |
|------------|-----------------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|
| April 2016 | Kender Primary School | Lewisham | Good | Good |
| May 2016 | Deptford Green | Lewisham | Requires Improvement | Requires Improvement |
| May 2016 | Sedgehill | Lewisham | Requires Improvement | Inadequate |
| June 2016 | St Matthews Academy | Lewisham | Good | Awaited |

| Month | School | LA | Previous Rating | New Rating |
|-----------|---|-----------|----------------------|----------------------|
| July 2016 | Alderwood Primary School | Greenwich | Requires Improvement | Requires Improvement |
| July 2016 | Gilbert Scott Primary School | Croydon | Requires Improvement | Requires Improvement |
| July 2016 | City of London Academy | Southwark | Good | Good |
| July 2016 | St George’s Church of England Primary School | Southwark | Requires Improvement | Requires Improvement |
| July 2016 | Woodside Primary School and Children’s Centre | Croydon | Requires Improvement | Requires Improvement |

Lewisham Borough-wide Parent Education Network Group - ENGage

Heidi Alexander MP has agreed in principle to support and host a borough-wide meeting of education stakeholders, primarily focussed at creating a strong, constructive voice for parents. The meeting will focus on supporting all Lewisham schools. Christine Gilbert, Cllr Paul Maslin, and Sara Williams have indicated their support. The event will now take place in the Autumn.

The event will require careful co-ordination and promotion, and parents have offered to help with the logistics with support from Heidi's office. Heidi will also be discussing this with the other Lewisham MPs. Parents want a formal voice in relation to education and our schools. – we want a seat at the table.

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Challenges for a Secondary School Teacher

In Sebastian Junger's book, *The Perfect Storm*, he describes how a series of events all converge to create a storm of enormous destructive power. Being a secondary school teacher, I can say that I recognise a similar scenario engulfing my school as I write this. I would just like to pass on what my extremely hardworking and dedicated team and I face in September.

In the last few years there has been a campaign to reform education. Its fundamental belief appears to be that students today are not getting the education they deserve. One of the charges against current education is that it is too easy. The skills and knowledge that students leave school with are inadequate to the requirements of their future success. This belief led the Coalition government to implement a wholesale overhaul of the system. Being a secondary school teacher, this has meant a complete restructuring of GCSE and A level education. For some, the changes have been implemented gradually, with changes first to one curriculum one year, followed by changes to the other in the next. It would make sense to change the GCSE first, as the new skills and knowledge would then feed into the new A level. Sadly, the changes have been rushed in with little or no thought to the experiences of students actually sitting the courses.

In my case, the recent graduates of the GCSE will now sit an A level that is very much different in focus from the old A level that used to follow, and actually complemented, the old GCSE.

The problem we face here is that because the government demanded the changes to be implemented as quickly as possible my team and I will be teaching 4 different curricula next year: Y10 will start the new GCSE; Y11 will finish the old one; Y12 will start the new, linear A level; while Y13 will finish the old A level. Two of those curricula are legacy ones and we have the resources prepared. The Y10s and Y12s,

however, will be entering uncharted waters. Now, this, in itself, while difficult, is not an insurmountable problem. The additional realities that raise the threat level are twofold. First, because of the speed of the changes, the exam boards have not had the time to properly prepare the resources necessary for these new courses. As it stands, there are no textbooks available for the new specifications. They will not be ready until Autumn. Who will suffer the most? The students. The second reality is the funding crisis.

My school is doing its very best to avoid redundancies, believing that teaching is a craft acquired over time, and that an experienced, and therefore expensive, teacher is a valuable resource. I have been teaching for about 9 years now and I can tell you there are still aspects of my teaching I am working to improve, the delivery of which will take several more years of practice to really hone. The knock on effect is that the budget in our school is stretched very, very thin. So thin that I have no budget next year. Not a penny. I will not be able to buy any textbooks for the new curricula. No textbooks is a big problem. Part of the changes made by the government to make the new curricula 'more challenging' appears to be simply to pile on the facts. Textbooks are a good delivery system for facts, leaving teaching time for the critical thinking aspects of the course. How we are to get through 2 brand new curricula with no textbook and little or no photocopying will negatively impact the students most. Lessons will be reduced to long periods of fact recording. That is no way to engage students.

In 1941, Churchill famously broadcast the line, "Give us the tools and we will finish the job." The perfect storm engulfing my school is robbing us of that. With constant changes to curriculum and expectations and reduced funding we no longer really know what the job is or have the resources to do it properly. While it makes the lives of teachers very hard, it is the experiences of the students that concerns me the most. What will they get from a Gradgrind, Victorian-style approach in a modern, post-factual world?

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Academy Watch

The Education Policy Institution's recommendations to the Government on education are:

1. The Government should not pursue full academisation as a policy objective, instead the objective should be for pupils to be in a good school, regardless of whether that is a high performing MAT or LA.
2. Government policy should be explicit about the intervention strategy it is pursuing for underperforming MATs, which should be consistent with intervention on LAs. The approach should not favour LAs or MATs, but rather target underperformance in any school.
3. The Government should consider allowing high performing LAs to become Academy Trusts, or avoid entirely forced academisation of higher performing LAs.
4. Resource and policy focus should be dedicated to understanding what drives high performance in MATs, developing new high quality Trusts and ensuring that those that are currently the lowest performing can learn from the best.

Underperforming MATs

These **MATs** are not considered by the Ofsted Head, Sir Michael Wilshaw to be performing well enough. Between them they are responsible for educating thousands of children. **School Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA), E-ACT, AET, The Education Fellowship, Wakefield City Academies Trust, CfBT Multi-Academy Trust, Collaborative Academies Trust, Oasis Learning Multi-Academy Trust.**

The Education Policy Institute report found that the the lowest performing school group, on the measures they used and at both primary and secondary, is a MAT:

Primary (Key Stage 2): **The Education Fellowship Trust**

Secondary (Key Stage 4): **The College Academies Trust**

We don't want these MATs in Lewisham.

What is CASE?

The Campaign for State Education has been a grass-roots, non-party political organisation since the 1960s. We believe that a good education is the right of all citizens and that this is best achieved through a comprehensive education system. We oppose segregation by '11-plus' or through covert means of selection.

What are we trying to achieve?

A properly funded, non-selective and locally democratically accountable school system that allows every child and young person to achieve their full potential. Visit the website: www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk

About the Author

My name is Nicky Dixon, and I live in Lewisham with my family. My children attend Lewisham schools. I joined CASE NEC in September 2015 as I wanted to be part of a campaign group trying to protect our national education system.

I decided to create this Newsletter to share information with parents about government plans and news of our schools. My aim is to create monthly newsletters with sections on Government Developments / Local schools / Academy Watch. I welcome contribution.

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